

true blue

Newsletter of the Friends of St George's



Confronting Neglected Tropical Diseases

Grenada came to the House of Lords in June with a fundraising dinner for the Windward Islands Research and Education Foundation (WINDREF) in aid of the fight against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in the smaller states of the Caribbean.

WINDREF, located at St George's University's True Blue Campus in Grenada, is a research institute with strong collaborative links with the University. Much of its work is concentrated on the NTDs of the Caribbean – such as lymphatic filariasis and intestinal parasites.

The dinner, hosted by WINDREF President, Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior, commemorated the work of Mike Fisher, who discovered Ivermectin – which has revolutionised the treatment and cure of myriad of infectious diseases since the 1970s. During the dinner, Lord Soulsby announced the

winner of the third Mike Fisher Memorial Award to Lord May of Oxford, former Chief Scientific adviser to the British Government.

Speaking at the dinner, Professor David Molyneux, President of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, said that the small island states of the Caribbean tended to be overlooked when new funds were announced to combat NTDs.

“Many of the NTDs that now occur in Latin America and the Caribbean were first brought there during the Atlantic slave trade”, he added. “So we have a moral obligation to confront them



with much greater vigour. The NTDs represent a tragic living legacy of slavery”.

Major sponsors for the occasion included St George's University – Chancellor Charles Modica and his wife Lisa flying over for the occasion, the Bartholomew John Lawson Foundation for Children, which is working with young people in Grenada; Lord Ballyedmond, whose

company, Norbrook pharmaceuticals is one of the Northern Ireland's most successful industries; and the Jason Roberts Foundations, an inspection for the young footballers and sportspeople in Grenada and Blackburn.

And providing the glamour was the lovely Vivian Burkhardt, Miss Grenada World, who sang the National anthem of Grenada at the start of dinner.

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Miss Grenada World, Vivien Burkhardt, graces the House of Lords (second left) with, from left, Cal Macpherson, Peggy Lambert, Lisa and Charles Modica.

Message from RODNEY CROFT, Dean of Clinical Studies UK



It is immensely encouraging to see the expansion of the Keith B Taylor Global Scholar's Programme – with St George's students taking their first year basic sciences at Northumbria University before moving to Grenada to complete their pre-clinical training. Especially as, after graduation, a significant number will take up posts in developing countries: a major objective of the programme.

I attended my fourth White Coat Ceremony at Northumbria in August where, with Sir Miles Irving, Chairman of the Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust (pictured centre) and Dr John Madden, Associate Dean of Students in the US (right), we helped to robe 148 students – up three fold from the charter class of January 2007.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, prior to the students making their Professional Commitment promise I was pleased to remind them of their profound obligation to be of service to others – as relevant today as when I graduated, over 40 years ago.

Commonwealth Scholarships – opportunities available

The Commonwealth Grenada St George's University Scholarship Programme, launched two years ago at Marlborough House – headquarters of the Commonwealth – now has eleven scholars enrolled, with a further four taking up their places in this August term.

The first Commonwealth scholar at the School of Medicine, Stephen Osiro from Kenya, has successfully completed his first academic year. A couple from the Maldives are joint scholars – Abdullah Zakariyya, who is on the two-year MBA programme, and his wife, Aminath Liusa, who is studying for her BSc in Management Information Systems. Students from Kenya, Nigeria, Cameroon and St Vincent are currently studying for their Masters in Public Health, while two students from Botswana are enrolled with the MBA programme.

“We are pleased to be offering these full tuition scholarships to some of the brightest young talent in the Commonwealth – particularly those in financial need,” says Peggy Lambert, Dean of Enrolment Planning at St George's, “and there are certainly plenty of opportunities left. We are ready to consider applications at any time. All information is on our website (www.sgu.edu).”

A total of 75 scholarships were originally offered by St George's, covering graduate and undergraduate degree programmes, as part of the University's 30th anniversary celebrations in 2007 – though not limited to any specific time frame. The scholarships are available to all 53 Commonwealth countries, preference being given to students from developing countries and small states.

- Dr Peter Bourne • Mrs Vanessa Bourne • Sir Kenneth Calman • Mr Rodney Croft •
- Mr David Jessop OBE • Baroness Hanham CBE • Baroness Howells of St Davids OBE • Sir Jim Lester DL •
- Professor Sir Malcolm Macnaughton • Professor Ian McConnell • Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior •
- Sir Kenneth Stuart • Mr Jonathan Taylor • Lord Walton of Detchant • Mr Bowen Wells •



Good Friend of St George's

Baroness Howells of St Davids OBE, Ros Howells to her friends, is the only Grenadian in the House of Lords. Raised to the peerage in 1999, St Davids – in her title – refers to the parish in Grenada where she was brought up, before leaving for Britain in 1951.

For a time in her life, she says, it seemed that she was “just another Caribbean living in London”. She married an Englishman, John Howells, and had two daughters. She confesses that she knew little about politics in those days.

And then things changed. She had always kept her links with Grenada – not least through her family – and in the late 1970s the government of Prime Minister Eric Gairy indicated that it wanted her to return. “Out of the blue”, she says, “I was suddenly appointed Deputy High Commissioner in London”.

Come 1979, and Maurice Bishop's revolution, the High Commissioner had been recalled and she found herself Acting High Commissioner, “holding the mission together”.

From that moment, “I made up my mind that I would support Grenada in its good or bad times.”

And so it has proved. Few will forget, for example, her determined efforts to squeeze adequate assistance from the British Government after the ravages of Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Her contribution to her adopted country, Britain, has been no less. Community relations she describes as her great passion

and she has campaigned long and tirelessly for justice in the field of racial equality. “I've never had a problem telling it as it is”, she says, “to either black or white”.

She certainly needed all her diplomatic skills during the investigations into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, who was stabbed to death in a racist attack in 1993.

“I was a community relations officer in Greenwich”, she says. “It was on my patch. They were an ordinary family living in a multi-racial area. Nobody expected trouble.” She became a friend and adviser to the stricken parents.

She retired as director of the Greenwich Racial Equality Office after a distinguished and wide-ranging career in the voluntary and social services sectors, for which she was awarded an OBE. But for Ros Howells retirement is not an option. She is often involved in debates in the Lords, where she sits on the Government benches, when community affairs or Caribbean issues are discussed. She was recently elected Chancellor of the University of Luton. Ros is no stranger to university life having been a member of the Court of Governors of Greenwich University where she was also awarded an honorary degree

And there is St George's: a long time Friend of St George's, she was appointed to the Board of WINDREF UK in 2006 and was recently invited by Chancellor Charles Modica to join St George's University UK Trust.

“The University makes a huge contribution to Grenada's economy”, she says, “but it has also kept faith with our island. It's not just run as a business, it has philanthropic ideals which I like. It stretches out its hands to the hospital and health services in Grenada. It offers qualifications in social sciences to Grenadians, which assist a large number of our young people. And on the Grenadian side, Grenadians respect educated people who want to become part of the community. They are proud of what the University has achieved.

“Grenada, with all its natural beauty, needs the kind of investment that the University is making and it offers, as an international centre, wonderful opportunities to other developing parts of the world, such as Africa. I am very keen to encourage this.”



Dr Jim Yong Kim, named in 2006 by Time Magazine as one of the “100 most influential people in the world”, was the commencement speaker when the largest audience in the history of St George's University attended the Annual Commencement Ceremony for the School of Medicine at the Avery Fisher Hall, New York, in May.

Dr Kim has spent over 20 years improving health in developing countries – particularly in the fields of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

He told the graduates that each one of them could help ease suffering in the world, with individual patients in small communities, or in the world at large.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chancellor Charles Modica praised those graduates, who had arrived in Grenada three weeks before Hurricane Ivan in 2004. “You rose above these additional challenges”, he said “and dedicated much to the rebuilding of Grenada”.

Two ceremonies were needed to accommodate the number of graduates from the December 2007 and June 2008 classes.

... Out of Africa

Agatha Tafadzwa Banga, has been accepted into St George's University's 3rd Year Pre-Med Course starting in January 2009. “I'm really looking forward to the opportunity and to be part of such a diverse community”, she says. “I see St George's as a place that will provide me with a world class education, and stand me in good stead for the future”.

Agatha, aged 19, graduated from Peterhouse Girls School in Marondera, in 2007, achieving A levels in Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics and French, which set her up perfectly for a degree in medicine. She held the position of both Head Girl and Junior Mayoress of the area, the latter being quite an achievement at such a young age. Agatha admits her choice to apply for St George's was “greatly influenced” by Dr Carol Munyame, a fellow Zimbabwean, St George's Alumnus and former head girl of Peterhouse.



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